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A
S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE
PARISH-CHURCH OF ST. JAMES,
COLCHESTER,
On SUNDAY the 24th of AUGUST, 1788,
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE
CHARITY SCHOOL.

BY
ROBERT ACKLOM INGRAM, A.M.
FELLOW OF QUEEN'S-COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE SUBSCRIBERS, AND
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE SAID CHARITY.

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STEELE R. M. O. N.

RECEIVED IN 1842

PARISH-CHURCH OF ST. JAMES
COLONIST

ON SUNDAY THE 24th AUGUST 1842

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE

CHURCH OF ST. JAMES



ROBERT WILLIAM HIGGINS

WILLIAM OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

RECEIVED AT THE REQUEST OF THE PARISH-CHURCH OF ST. JAMES
FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CHURCH

COLONIST

PRINTED AND SOLD BY W. H. HIGGINS

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P R E F A C E.

THAT the education of youth is an object of the utmost importance to society, and demands the serious attention of every well-disposed Christian, will be readily allowed, when it is considered, how much the future conduct of our lives depends on the impressions, we receive in our earlier years. So great is the ordinary influence of education both on individuals, and on the community at large, that, as an intelligent writer has observed*, “Every man of reflection can trace out almost every indisposition of his body and mind to some mismanagement in his education:”—and, “We might estimate the principles and manners of the times from the principles and manners of our Universities.” To this we may add in the words of the same author, that, “Whatever effectual steps are taken towards a public reformation, must be taken in the education of our youth.” Whether we lament any prevailing

* David Williams’s Treatise on Education.

prevailing vice, any general misconception of religion, or any dangerous national propensity, the remedy must be sought for in our schools and seminaries of learning. Our first and great concern is, to instil those principles, we are desirous of exciting, into the tender breasts of children, and carefully to superintend the formation of their earliest habits. The wish'd for reformation would then follow almost as a matter of course. And till the way is thus judiciously prepared, all moderate exertions, it is to be feared, would prove ineffectual, and more violent measures would be necessarily attended with danger.

In the present age the education of youth peculiarly demands our attention. A relaxation of discipline, levity and indolence of disposition, and an affectation of fashionable manners, have long been insinuating themselves into our seminaries of learning. Parents have been much more solicitous to furnish their children with those external accomplishments, which are commonly admired in polite circles, and to give them a knowledge of the world, as it is usually stiled, though, I fear, only a pernicious insight into the licentious principles, the immoral habits, and refined hypocrisy of one class of individuals, than to fill their minds with

with solid attainments. And what might have considerably obviated the fatal consequences of too early an acquaintance with the vices of mankind, religious instruction, it is a melancholy reflection, hardly obtains any share in the ordinary course of education. The result of which has been a general relaxation of principles, an enervated habit of mind, and an intemperate pursuit of pleasure. Our charitable institutions for the education of poor children have also sensibly experienced the sad effects of the prevailing disposition of the age; as it appears to have been a general complaint, that 'till within a few years they were reduced to a very low ebb, that they met with little encouragement, and that their discipline was not properly inspected.

There is a certain period, when a kingdom becomes ripe for reformation, when a national depravity arrives at the highest pitch of malignity, that is compatible with the well-being of society. The public, awakening, as it were, from a state of lethargy, is alarmed at the pernicious consequences of increasing corruption; and at length perceives the necessity of taking some vigorous measures for opposing the accumulating evil. Such of late appears to have been our own situation.

ation. We are happy to observe, that a spirit of reformation is already at work, and we have no doubt, but it will gradually be rendered more general. The great encouragement, which the late valuable institution of Sunday-Schools has every where met with, bespeaks a general conviction of the increasing relaxation of religious principles, and of the consequent depravity of morals; and affords every benevolent heart the most flattering assurance, that a rational attempt to promote any requisite species of reformation will be ably supported. It also induces us to hope, that some equally efficacious means may be devised of reforming the manners of the superior classes; and 'till something of this kind is effected, we must expect, that the natural advantages of the Sunday-Schools will be greatly obstructed. The rich and great do not usually copy the manners and sentiments of the poor, but the morals and principles of the poor are considerably affected by those of their superiors; and all their zeal for the reformation of the lower classes may be almost entirely overpowered by the more prevailing influence of their licentious examples.

These considerations, however, instead of rendering us remiss, ought rather to induce us to be
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the more zealous in the support of the Sunday-Schools, and those other charitable institutions, which are recommended in the subsequent discourse: for the more encouragement we afford to the religious education of poor children, the more do we cherish the spirit of reformation, and the more will it extend itself into every other department of life. The Sunday-Schools have already had a considerable effect on the manners of the superior classes. They have been the means of pressing upon their consideration some thoughts respecting the importance of an affecting sense of religion, which, we have reason to hope, has contributed to their improvement: and the Clergy themselves have been awakened to a greater assiduity in the discharge of their parochial duties.

One obvious effect of the Sunday-Schools every humane heart will contemplate with peculiar satisfaction. Though benevolence is the boast of the present age, and, as a worthy Prelate has sagaciously observed, is represented as "the sum of all virtue and all religion;" * yet this benevolence, as is more particularly noticed in the following discourse, is too frequently withdrawn from the interests of the inferior classes, and extended only

* Porteus's 8th Sermon,

only towards our equals and superiors, those who may do good to us in return. Our Country-Gentlemen, instead of regarding it, as a duty annexed to their property, to spend a considerable part of their time amongst their dependants, and to employ a portion of those ample profits, which they enjoy by the industry of the inferior classes, in promoting their happiness and comfort in return, are endeavouring to divest themselves of every possible concern with the poor *, and are flying from the dreary retirements of the country to consume

* I cannot here forbear noticing, with a mixture of indignation and concern, that not only our Gentlemen of property are unwilling to take upon themselves those parish offices, in which they are capable of correcting much ordinary mismanagement, and of being the patrons and fathers of the poor; but that the Farmers also are imitating so pernicious an example, and the Churchwardens and Overseers, whose peculiar office and duty it is to interest themselves in the concerns of the poor, are consigning them over to the mercy of a workhouse master, himself raised from the lowest rank of Plebeians, with all that illiberality and hard-heartedness, with which petty authority is usually accompanied, and the leading object of whose attention is merely to enrich himself. It would be hard to conceive, how such overseers could reconcile their oaths to their consciences, were we not sensible that the bulk of mankind are inured to perjury by the multiplicity of oaths, that are required on the most frivolous occasions, and administered with the utmost indecency, if I may not say, prophanity. An alarming evil, that calls aloud for the serious attention of the Legislature!

stume their time and substance in habits of dissipation amongst the more polished circles of an overgrown metropolis, and other fashionable resorts. Whatever, therefore, has a tendency to curb this pernicious spirit, must be productive of the most happy consequences to society.

The Sunday-Schools not only afford a noble exercise for the benevolent affections, but, as they have generally attracted the public notice, they have been the means of directing the attention of the rich towards the concerns of the poor. Many instances of want and affliction are thus presented to their view, of which they have hitherto remained in perfect ignorance. It is impossible, that a refined understanding, and a heart not destitute of sensibility, can behold distress without being affected, and feeling a desire of administering relief. For it is not entirely from want of humanity and compassion, that the rich have been inattentive to the concerns of the poor, but because their thoughts have been continually engrossed by other objects. Thus may they by degrees become sensible of the great good they are capable of doing even by a very small portion of their incomes. I am much mistaken, if a considerable mutual affection and attention has not already been excited between the
rich

rich and the poor. The former begin to feel a motive for confirming the encouragement, they have publicly afforded to the religious education of their inferiors, by the exemplariness of their conduct: and the latter have shewn a corresponding desire of recommending themselves by the propriety and regularity of their behaviour. The rich, it is to be hoped, will be soon convinced, that there are pleasures to be derived from other sources, besides the vain gratifications of sense, and that the private retreats of the country can supply them with such elevated satisfactions, as are sought for in vain in the gay licentious circles of towns. The anniversaries instituted in several places for the benefit of the Sunday-Schools, it is obvious, contribute greatly to the promotion of this desirable effect.

As a blessed spirit of reformation is thus gradually extending itself into every department of society, it cannot, we hope, be long before the public attention will be sensibly struck with the consideration, that, while we are thus zealously providing religious instruction for the poor, hardly any kind of regard should be paid to religion in the education of the rich; that the communication of religious knowledge should obtain no share in the

the regular studies of the principal schools and universities of this kingdom; and that many young men should be sent from the Universities into the Church, after having contracted habits and dispositions extremely inimical to the peculiar duties of a parochial minister, with less particular knowledge of religion and the Scriptures, less purity of morals, and integrity of principles, than many poor children, when they are dismissed from the Sunday and other Charity Schools.

It is therefore most ardently to be desired, that the public voice would unanimously concur in demanding, as the next grand step in the progress of reformation, that Divinity may be introduced into our Universities as a regular Academical study, and that at least it may meet with equal encouragement with those other studies, which are now so successfully cultivated *. It would be too much to expect, that ecclesiastical preferment should usually be distributed in such a manner, as would tend most to the encouragement of religious knowledge and good morals; and that every person, that has the disposal of any, should consider himself only in the light of a guardian of

* A Sermon preached by the present Bishop of London before the University of Cambridge, on Commencement Sunday, July 5, 1767, contains many excellent reflections on this subject.

of the revenues of the Church, and bound in duty as a faithful steward to confer it so, as might conduce most to the glory of his omnipotent Lord and Master. But when the spirit of reformation is become more general, it is to be hoped, that some superior attention will be shewn to merit, and that those persons, whom the Universities shall recommend to the public notice, as distinguished for their proficiency in religious knowledge, and the exemplariness of their conduct, will not fail to meet with the natural and proper reward of juvenile industry, abilities, and good morals, by being placed in a proper situation for rendering their valuable qualifications useful to society. And I am persuaded the bench of Bishops is not destitute of several worthy characters, who would readily concur in promoting an object of so essential importance both to the temporal and eternal interests of mankind.

Perhaps I may seem to have wandered considerably from the leading object of this little publication. But I conceived, that an attempt to ascertain the proper value and importance of the encouragement of Charity Schools, as a part of that more extensive scheme of reformation, which every pious heart would wish to promote, as particularly

ticularly requisite in the present times, would not be unacceptable to the Christian reader.

The connexion, that ought to be maintained between the Sunday and other Charity Schools, I hope, I have considered in a proper light : from whence it will appear, that neither of them are superfluous ; but that, each operating in its proper sphere, they may jointly be productive of several advantages, which it would be impossible to expect from either of them separately, or from both considered as distinct and disunited. It would be a great blessing to society, if the several departments of life were filled with persons of abilities and dispositions suited to their stations. Yet it would be difficult to persuade the superior classes to attend to this in the education of their children. The fond parent fancies he discerns those valuable qualifications in his son, which he wishes to discover, till at length he is too often convinced of his error by the ruin of his child. But in the distribution of our charities we may judge with more impartiality, and, as there are gradations in the employments of the poor, we should endeavour to render every superior advantage we confer, a reward to merit, and an incentive to industry and the improvement of abilities.

Encouraged

Encouraged by the many flattering marks of approbation, with which the following discourse was received as delivered from the pulpit, the author has been the more easily induced to submit it to the public inspection, sincerely wishing to contribute his mite to the advancement of Religion, and the glory of God. He has not the vanity even to indulge a hope, that it will stand the severer criticism of the closet with equal success. But if by the blessing of Almighty God it should in any shape contribute to the benefit of a useful charity, if it should prove the means of rescuing one soul from a state of ignorance and irreligion, or of rewarding one instance of distinguished merit, or if it should in the least conduce to the diffusion of that glorious spirit of reformation, which has already discovered itself amongst us, his labours will be abundantly compensated, and may the glory be ascribed to God.

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S E R M O N.

GALAT. VI. 9.

LET US NOT BE WEARY IN WELL-DOING: FOR IN DUE
SEASON WE SHALL REAP, IF WE FAINT NOT.

SUCH is the propensity of man to evil,
so perpetually is he exposed to the in-
fluence of vicious affections from within
and temptations from without, as to require
every awakening incentive to the vigorous
prosecution of those objects, upon which his
eternal salvation depends. But this unstead-
iness of conduct is not the only effect of hu-
man depravity, as our opinions also respecting

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the circumstances of our duty are subject to continual perversions; so that it appears necessary to explain what is understood by WELL-DOING, lest, by an exhortation to *patient continuance in it*, we should seem to countenance many actions, that are extremely inconsistent with the Christian character. I design therefore on the present occasion,

I. First, to enquire into the nature of that disinterested benevolence, which Christianity enjoins, as distinguished from those fictitious appearances of it, which often undeservedly experience the approbation of the world.

II. I shall next consider the several advantages of those charitable institutions, which are the immediate object of our present attention: and

III. Shall then conclude with some pertinent exhortations to perseverance in *well-doing*.

I. The

I. The advancement of learning, the improvement of society, and the diffusion of religious knowledge, have jointly contributed to refine our sentiments, and humanize our manners. Hence in the present age we discover a remarkable appearance and profession of benevolence. Yet, I fear, impartial veracity must ingenuously confess, that this benevolence is often more specious than real, that it is destitute of universality, withdrawn from the most proper objects, and subordinate to impure motives,

In a state of considerable refinement it is perceived, that a mutual communication of civilities conduces greatly to the enjoyment of life. The pleasures of society are therefore more eagerly pursued, than is consistent with a proper attention to the duties of our respective stations. We are stimulated also by interested motives to insinuate ourselves into the favour of those, who are placed in more elevated situations, and have the power of facilitating our worldly advancement. Thus the principal objects of our benevo-

lence are our equals and superiors ; and those apparent virtues are most esteemed and cultivated, which consist in communicating such good offices, as we hope to experience in return, such as contribute to heighten and improve the pleasures of society : while other qualities are subjected to neglect or censure in proportion as they have a tendency to obstruct them ; and while the more noble and manly virtues degenerate into those frivolous arts of pleasing, which for the most part are merely the suggestions of adulation and hypocrisy. Hence, though in the present age the whole of religion with an appearance of Scripture authority is comprised in the principle of benevolence, yet this benevolence, so far from being that *love*, which is described as the very essence of the divine nature, and which, proceeding from a rational affection towards God, comprehends every social virtue, is only subservient to interested motives, and considered as an apology for the neglect of other essential duties.

Having

Having thus briefly ascertained the qualities of that fictitious benevolence, which often occupies the place of real virtue; let us now enquire into the nature of that more disinterested philanthropy, which is the distinguishing characteristic of the christian religion.

While motives of pleasure or interest carry our thoughts towards our equals or superiors, it is the object of religion to draw our attention downwards to the inferior classes of mankind. It informs us, that the most laudable exercise of our benevolence consists not in conferring favours on those, who already possess every requisite for the enjoyment of life, but in communicating a portion of those many blessings, God has mercifully bestowed upon us, to those who are deprived of almost every comfort; and that the rewards of eternity are chiefly provided not for such kindnesses, as meet with equivalent returns in this world, but for those good actions, for which no present return can be expected, except the unfeigned gratitude

gratitude of a thankful heart. It teaches us, that we are not entrusted with the goods of fortune, that we should dissipate them in a round of expensive pleasures and fashionable amusements, in conciliating the affections of the rich and great, and in making sumptuous entertainments for our friends, our brethren, our kinsmen, and rich neighbours; but rather that we should employ them, as faithful stewards, in feeding the household of God, *the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind* amongst our fellow-creatures, *giving them their meat in due season*, in the season of affliction and distress. *Charge them*, says the Apostle, *that are rich in this world, that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* Such surely is the most profitable employment of our wealth. If the poor can make no return for the good we do them, their father, *who is in heaven*, will make abundant returns. What recompense our friends may make for our

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our kind offices to them will perish with the actual moment of enjoyment, or at most cannot extend beyond the short limit of this transitory life: while the rewards, we shall receive for our exertions in the cause of our inferiors, will constitute an everlasting treasure.

If a spirit of charity, which has been incorporated into the very vitals of our constitution, has provided the distressed part of mankind with that seasonable relief, for which they before depended solely on the humanity of the well-disposed Christian, it has by no means rendered the exercise of private benevolence unnecessary. There are, and ever will be, a variety of interesting occasions, on which the more private exertions of charity are essentially requisite, either to remedy the unavoidable defects and inconveniences of human laws, or to contribute to the welfare of the inferior classes in the promotion of such objects, with respect to which legislative authority has not yet interfered, or where its interposition would be

be unseasonable. While the law only provides the distressed with the common necessities of life, yet, when by the mercy of God we are surrounded by every species of earthly enjoyment, surely it is also incumbent upon us to distribute a small portion of the superior comforts and advantages, we are blest with, amongst those, who are removed at a distance from them.

II. Of the several objects, that still demand the interposition of private benevolence, our charity is now solicited in favour of one distinguished for its importance, and the extensive nature of the benefits it is productive of. While other acts of benevolence are for the most part of a momentary and perishable nature, here the effects of our charitable exertions are permanent; and not confined to the immediate objects of our attention, but descending also to their children, and variously contributing to the benefit of society; and not only conducing to the immediate relief and assistance of the poor, but operating also as a preventive of future poverty.

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The advantages of this charity, as it respects the education of poor children, I shall more particularly consider with regard to,

1. The diffusion of religious impressions ;
2. The communication of other useful branches of knowledge ; and,
3. The formation of certain habits and dispositions, which are extremely desirable in the inferior departments of life.

1. The age and country, in which we live, are not so remarkably characterized for gross vices and extreme profligacy of manners, as for want of seriousness. Our sense of religion is not entirely extinguished, but has degenerated into a melancholy state of luke-warmth. Sacred truths have been divested of their proper importance ; the interesting events of eternity are almost forgotten, and the duties of piety are neglected : while the distinctions between virtue and vice are nearly levelled ; and sin is no longer viewed with due abhorrence and detestation. It appears then, that what benefit we might have derived from the advancement of learn-

ing, and the refinement of our sentiments; has been considerably obstructed by the want of an affecting sense of religion. In order, therefore, to draw every advantage from the several blessings, with which God has mercifully visited this favoured nation, it only remains to revive a due sense of religion amongst us. And what obviously presents itself to our consideration, as the only probable means of effecting so desirable an event, is to make it peculiarly the object of education. Persons grown old in iniquity, in whom vicious habits are confirmed, and ingrafted, as it were, into their very nature, are not without the utmost difficulty reclaimed from their perilous situation. But the pliant minds of children are susceptible of every impression; and, when our attention is directed to the yet unpoluted breast, in which the original depravity of human nature is not increased by the knowledge of actual sin, and the formation of vicious habits, we are filled with the most encouraging hopes, that our pious endeavours to awaken a sense of religion will

will be attended with the desired success. Every Christian, therefore, as he wishes for the promotion of religion at a time, when it is daily growing into neglect and contempt, must certainly consider it as his indispensable duty, to afford liberal encouragement to every species of religious education, and particularly amongst those poor children, whose situation in life admits of fewest opportunities of religious improvement, and exposes them to the greatest danger of corruption.

I need not, I hope, remind you, how peculiarly requisite it is, in a large town like this, to fortify the inexperienced mind against the many temptations and allurements from the paths of duty, to which incautious youth is continually exposed; where the danger of bad company is particularly great; where living examples of irreligion and immorality, far more powerful than precept on minds not regularly formed for virtue, are constantly presented to their view; and where vice is openly

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displayed

displayed in the most flattering and insinuating colours. And can we conceive, my brethren, a more amiable office of humanity, or one more congenial to the virtuous heart, than to be the means of preserving the yet unsullied breast from the poisonous contagion of vice, of rescuing uncorrupted youth, by the timely interposition of our benevolence, from the sink of irreligion and ignorance, to be brought up *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?*

2. In the sister-institution of Sunday-Schools the intention is to diffuse a general sense of religion, and communicate that species only of human knowledge, which is most immediately conducive to that valuable purpose; which, as it is a most benevolent institution, by the blessing of God has met with wonderful encouragement, and has been attended with the most flattering success. But in that Charity, which at present engages our attention, several superior advantages are designed, tho' necessarily confined to fewer objects; as a provision

provision is made, not only for the more assiduous cultivation of the same inestimable attainments, but for instruction in other useful branches of knowledge:—and there is one point of view, in which by the assistance of the Sunday-Schools its advantage to society may be considerably improved: from whence we may form a judgment of of the proper connexion, that ought to be maintained between these two useful institutions.

In the lowest departments of life, what is principally necessary, as an object of education, is to inspire a sense of religion. But in such stations, as are a little removed from the lowest, which yet are occupied by the inferior classes of people, under which description we may comprehend a considerable part of menial servants, and the lower ranks of mechanics and tradesmen, a knowledge of writing and arithmetic, as well as a greater facility in reading, are extremely desirable, which it is the design of the present charity to afford; besides in many instances to place
deserving

deserving objects in a proper situation for rendering their attainments useful to society. Now whom ought we to be desirous of raising from amidst their equals to be distinguished by these superior advantages, but such as discover some instances of distinguished merit and good sense. The same differences of abilities and dispositions without doubt obtain amongst the lower classes of mankind, as in all other stations; and we have every reason to suppose, that many persons of very superior parts have been entirely lost to society, and doomed to the lowest stages of drudgery, for want of the seasonable regard of some benevolent patron in the time of youth. To raise such persons from poverty and obscurity, and to place them in a proper situation both for advancing their own interest, and for contributing in a higher degree to the benefit of society, is a valuable exertion of Christian benevolence.

The Sunday-Schools afford us an opportunity of making a fair trial of the abilities of poor children in general, and of bringing forth

forth to public notice such as discover any marks of superiority. May I therefore be permitted to suggest, that, if the benefactors to the present Charity would select from the children in the Sunday-Schools, such as distinguish themselves by their proficiency and good behaviour, and as a reward afford them those superior opportunities of improvement, which are here provided; it might be the means of raising from obscurity such deserving persons, as are capable of benefiting mankind in a higher and more enlarged sphere, and facilitating their road to subsequent advancement in proportion to their abilities and merit? Thus would these two excellent charities operate as a mutual assistance to each other. While the former would present to your view such objects as are deserving of your farther beneficence, this might be applied as a seasonable encouragement to industry and good behaviour, and a suitable reward of merit. If then many distinguished personages, many valuable members of society, have already received the first elements of their education in this charitable

ritable seminray, under the present advantageous circumstances we may reasonably hope, that its benefits will be still more extensive, and that a yet greater number of eminent characters may be rescued from the lowest sink of ignorance and poverty to fill even the superior departments of life with credit and success, as a lasting memorial of of the seasonable exertions of your philanthropy.

3. It is also no inconsiderable advantage of a well-conducted education, that it is naturally productive of certain habits and dispositions, which facilitating the influence of religion and other useful attainments, and acting in subordination thereto, greatly contribute to the improvement of the character.

I need not suggest to you the obvious tendency of the order and regularity of school discipline to beget a certain decency and propriety of conduct, a submissive behaviour towards superiors, and a desire of acquiring the good opinion of the respectable part of mankind ;

mankind ; nor need I particularize the several advantages of such good dispositions in the inferior departments of society. You must also be sensible, that it is equally in the power of education to inspire a principle of œconomy and frugality, so essentially requisite in the lower stations, and a sense of neatness, which is extremely conducive to health as well as œconomy, and a great recommendation in their intercourse with their superiors. But what is yet of more importance is, that education awakens the nobler faculties of the soul, that it excites a spirit of manly emulation, promotes habits of industry, and inspires a certain generosity and liberality of sentiment, and a rational sense of independency, which it would be presumptuous to conceive, that even the lowest of mankind were incapable of possessing ; and which will operate as a seasonable preventive of those more selfish and dishonest principles, which are the natural consequences of poverty. A poor man that has a becoming sense of independency, and a generosity of spirit, experiences a secret

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satisfaction

satisfaction in the reflection, that the common necessities he partakes of are of his own procuring, the just reward of his industry; and feels himself stimulated to the diligent employment of his time, that he may enjoy the pleasure even of a scanty maintenance, that is earned by the sweat of his brow, rather than be obliged to accept of that sordid relief, which is given *of necessity*, and not *of a willing mind*.

Permit me now in confirmation of what I have advanced to direct your attention to the living instances of the success of your beneficence, which are here presented to your view. You behold about three-score children raised from the abyss of poverty and ignorance to be early instructed in *the fear of the Lord*, that are habituated to a regular attendance on their devotions, and blest with such other advantages, as are calculated to render them useful and virtuous members of society. You perceive them orderly in their behaviour; you have heard them read with propriety, and devoutly
join

join with the congregation in their united prayers and praises to Almighty God. You have also been witnesses of a farther proof of the care, that has been taken to instruct them in the principles of their religion * : and many of you are personally acquainted with the proficiency they have made in other useful branches of knowledge. Yet if in any respect the several benefits I have described have not been duly obtained, it does not argue, that the charity is not in itself so useful, as has been represented, because the obvious advantages of a pious institution are sometimes obstructed by the common depravities of corrupted nature, but that possibly your attention to the success of your contributions has not been sufficiently active, and that you have not shewn yourselves properly interested in the welfare of those children, whom you have undertaken to patronize.

But let these poor children plead for themselves : let the emphatic language of

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* The children had repeated the Church Catechism in the course of divine service.

innocence and humility more expressive than words, more interesting to the feelings of a pious heart, than the slow process of didactic argumentation, prevail with you to continue to share with them the superior advantages God has blessed you with. But they plead not for themselves alone; they kindly plead for many of their dear brethren and companions, equally the favourites of heaven with themselves, and equally deserving of the advantages your beneficence has provided them, who yet linger in the sink of vice, ignorance, idleness and poverty. Let then the comparison of what these children are with what they were, and what many continue to be, excite your pious benevolence to render the benefits of this charity still more extensive. Is it possible to contemplate that innocence, which occupies every feature in the youthful countenance, and at the same time behold that false security and careless inattention to their perilous situation, the consequence of inexperience, which may soon betray them into the lowest abyss of profligacy and sensuality, without feeling
every

every humane affection awakened to rescue them from beneath impending destruction, that you may kindly present them to their Redeemer's arms, that they may receive his blessing impressed on their hearts bringing forth the invaluable fruits of good living ?

III. Recollect, my Christian brethren, the subjects I have now proposed to your consideration. Our benevolence, I have endeavoured to convince you, is too generally withdrawn from the interests of the inferior classes of mankind, and confined to our equals and superiors. I have also recommended to you an important occasion for the interposition of that more disinterested benevolence, which Christianity enjoins. And now, would to God ! it were not necessary to exhort you to perseverance *in well-doing*, and to improve and extend that spirit of Charity, which confessedly has been already productive of some desirable fruit.

Let it not suffice, that a few crumbs should fall for the benefit of the poor from the
tables.

tables of affluence and profusion ;—that a few trifling sums should be devoted to charitable purposes, which bear no sensible proportion to our incomes and ordinary expences. Why do we boast of the increasing wealth of the nation, and that we are supplied with every source of happiness and enjoyment, if indeed this wealth and these means of happiness are possessed but by a few, while the bulk of mankind, the inferior classes, are hardly supplied with the very necessaries of life ? Alas ! we only glory in our shame, while the wants of the poor are a living instance of the misapplication of the talents God has committed to our trust. With increasing wealth our expences, our luxuries, our schemes of pleasure have been abundantly increased ; but let us ask our consciences, whether our works of charity have increased in equal proportion ? If every place of public amusement meets with the most ample encouragement ; if the ministers of our pleasures,—of pleasures, which, if not deemed vicious in the opinion of the world, yet afford unseasonable countenance to vice, and contribute

contribute to the diffusion of licentious sentiments,—pleasures, which tend to debase the mental faculties, and to enervate every manly feature in the human character :—if these ministers of the frivolous gratifications of sense are amassing enormous wealth, can it be possible, that instances of distress, that loathsome poverty should still surround us; that works of beneficence should still demand, and too often in vain demand our charitable interposition; or that we should fly from the dreary abodes of indigence, lest our sensibility should be involuntarily awakened to bestow that relief, which our extravagance renders unseasonable? *My brethren, these things ought not so to be.* These appearances do not become a people peculiarly favoured by the blessing of God. Let not then unbounded sums be squandered on the vain delights of sense, while a few shillings are with difficulty rescued from the abyss of needless profusion to be devoted to the service of God, in providing for the best interests of the more distressed of our fellow-creatures. Ask your own consciences, whether

ther you ever felt any real and lasting satisfaction from the frivolous enjoyments of this world. Which then is the most profitable use of riches,—to expend them on pleasures, which perish with the actual moment of enjoyment, or employ them on such objects, from whence our minds will be continually refreshed with the elevated satisfaction of conscious merit, will be ever gratified with the pleasing contemplation of the good fruits of our pious benevolence, and for which we shall obtain a glorious prospect of an eternal recompence? Oh! had you known and felt the pure pleasures of disinterested benevolence, you would eagerly rescue every useless expence from the vortex of extravagance, and even deprive yourselves of some comforts and pleasures, that your good works might not be divested of their proper merit! Did you perceive the real value of the advantages God has bestowed upon you, you would employ them in purchasing his eternal favour: you would by a prudent use of *the mammon of unrighteousness* interest the precious souls of these and many other poor children

children in your behalf, whose prevailing eloquence would ably plead your cause before the throne of grace, and procure an entrance for your immortal souls into the *everlasting habitations* of heavenly joys.

The importance of my subject is the only apology I shall attempt to alledge for having transgressed so long upon your patience. Where the interest of Religion and the glory of God are immediately concerned, where the temporal and eternal prosperity of our more distressed brethren is recommended to our attention, it would have been unpardonable to have suppressed any argument, that might and ought to dispose your hearts to advance that good work, in which we are at present engaged. I conclude with the pertinent exhortation of the Apostle in my text; “let us not be weary in well-doing; for in “due season we shall reap, if we faint not:”—praying that it may interest every affection, and awaken every principle of action, and that, if any thing I have now said has excited one tender sentiment of humanity,

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one kind regard for the best interests of your fellow-creatures, you may yet rescue some portion of the good things of this life from the service of vanity and sensuality, to devote them to the glory of God, that you may reap the present satisfaction of contemplating the kindly fruits of your good works, and hereafter inherit a crown of everlasting glory: *that you may be blessed; for these little ones cannot recompense you: for you will be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.*

4 OC 58

F I N I S.

